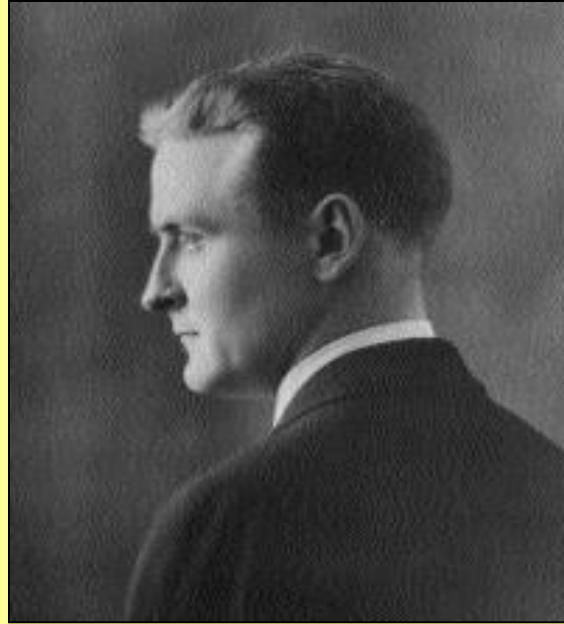


# F. Scott Fitzgerald 1896-1940



Author of *The Great Gatsby* (1925)

Member of “The Lost  
Generation”

# Fitzgerald's Life (1896-1940)

- F. Scott Fitzgerald was born in the Midwest to a father who had a manufacturing job and a mother who came into an inheritance that allowed them to live comfortably
- He attended Princeton University
- At the age of eighteen, he fell in love with Zelda Sayre, the daughter in a wealthy, well-established family from Montgomery, Alabama.

# Fitzgerald's Life (1896-1940)

- Fitzgerald had a keen sense of how money can divide people, saying in a letter to a friend:

**"That was always my experience-- a poor boy in a rich town; a poor boy in a rich boy's school; a poor boy in a rich man's club at Princeton ... . However, I have never been able to forgive the rich for being rich, and it has colored my entire life and works." -"F. Scott Fitzgerald: A Life in Letters"**

# Fitzgerald's Life

- Fitzgerald's life spanned several important time periods in American history
  - Pre-War to 1920
  - The 1920s
  - The 1930s

# Pre-War to 1920s

- Fitzgerald volunteered and served in the war, though he did not ever see battle
- The first World War cost over seven million European casualties and 117,000 American lives
- The destruction of WWI was unparalleled. Many artists reacted to this event and the corresponding emotions that followed it by chronicling the intense uncertainty that people felt.

# Pre-War to 1920s

Fitzgerald wrote about this mentality in “My Generation”:

“So we inherited two worlds: the one of hope to which we had been bred; the one of disillusion which we had discovered early for ourselves. And that first world was growing as remote as another country, however close in time.”

# The 1920s

- This decade was known as “the Boom” because of the general prosperity and the “easy money” being won in the stock market
- The 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> amendments (Prohibition & women’s suffrage) were ratified by 1920, giving rise to bootlegging and speakeasies
- This decade is often called “The Jazz Age,” not only for the importance of music but also loose moral behavior

# The 1920s

- This decade was characterized by prejudice evidenced through the formation of the Ku Klux Klan and raging anti-Semitism
- The 20s were known as a collegiate decade: many families sent kids to college for the first time, regardless of their background
- The Great Depression began with the stock market crash of 1929



# The 1920s

- This time period is considered the greatest American literary Renaissance after the nineteenth century: Ernest Hemingway, William Faulkner, Gertrude Stein, e.e. cummings, T.S. Eliot, Ezra Pound...and many others produced some of their best work during this age

# The 1920s

- The 1920s was also a golden age of American music: Irving Berlin, Ira Gershwin, and Cole Porter wrote many of the “show tunes” that we still sing today, while Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington, and Bessie Smith highlighted the jazz scene.

# The 1930s

- Between 1930 and 1939, unemployment rose from 4, 340, 000 to 10, 000, 000.
- American labor unions expanded
- Adolph Hitler became Chancellor of Germany in 1933; radical political groups were visible but not yet powerful
- World War II started in 1939

# F. Scott Fitzgerald

- *The Great Gatsby* heralds the highs and the lows of Fitzgerald's experience. Debauchery, excess, and hedonism figure prominently in his novel, but so do emptiness, loss, and uncertainty.
- Nick is our moral compass through a novel that takes us through what seems, at times, an amoral, amorphous, "lost" place.

# Nick's “El Greco” World (page 185)

